



SB 264 Local Govt. Comm.  
Exhibit # 4  
Date 2-8-07  
# 264

February 8, 2007

TO: Chairwoman Gillan and Members of the Senate Local Government Committee

FROM: Pat Callbeck Harper, Associate Director- Communications, AARP Montana

RE: **Support of SB 264, Low-income rates for local government utilities**

*Pat Callbeck Harper*

Madame Chair and members of the committee my name is Pat Callbeck Harper, Associate State Director of AARP Montana. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization with 153,000 members in Montana. We strongly support Senator Kaufmann's bill to allow local government utilities to provide assistance to limited-income people in their service areas.

SB 264 is especially helpful to seniors. According to Census projections and our own research, we know that 82% of people 65 and older in Montana own their homes. It is typically homeowners, and not renters, who directly pay the cost of utilities provided by local governments. As the cost for health care, energy and other vital services increase for seniors, this measure could provide critical assistance.

AARP has been a dedicated supporter of the bill assistance programs for energy offered by the federal government and the electric and natural gas providers in the state and are grateful to extend our support to other essential services. Water and sewer services are vital to the health and personal welfare of all Montanans. And we know, the cost associated with these services is taking up a larger percentage of families' and seniors' incomes.

Montana would not be the only state to facilitate these types of discounts. Programs in other states allow assistance to limited income people.

I urge your support of SB 264, which allows seniors to age in their homes and stay independent.